THE ART OF GEORGE COHEN

Surrealism denied the absolute truth of the world as it is experienced by the senses and understood by the mind. It proposed that reality is not a matter of induction and deduction alone, it also involves what can only be felt, intuited, and dreamed. Following Freud, it insisted that there are areas of the human personality that are normally suppressed, hidden or disguised. Our senses help to orient us in the material world, but there are vast regions of experience--which are in fact the well-springs of creativity--that are waiting to be discovered, explored, and revealed; and Surrealism developed several methods of accomplishing this aim. George Cohen's works appear to be related to Surrealism.

This artist deals with images of human figures and their position in space. He has at times used mirrors fixed to the surfaces of his paintings and constructions in order to extend their dimensions and create spatial ambiguities. Certain Surrealist and related works have used mirrors in a symbolic way. They refer to the surface appearance of the world. The Realist speaks of art as "holding the mirror up to nature." The Surrealist plunges through the mirror (e.g. in Jean Cocteau's film *Orpheus*) to discover the world behind the hard surface of visual appearances. Cohen's use of mirrors is not unrelated. He has used them along with painting and collage to destroy the normal relationship between the figure and the ground. He has written: "The space in the mirror is both the space behind and in front of the painting at one and the same time; the mirrors opened the surface and allowed the environment of the painting to recede into it, or to project from the painting to meet the viewer." And further, "The mirrors play a role in the particular temporality of these paintings as they receive all the changes that pass before them, while making the viewer aware that the painting is the way it is only when he is there."

The artist seldom uses mirrors anymore, yet he is still concerned with relations between the figures, space, and the surface--relations that are often ambiguous. However, he now usually accomplishes his purpose with paint alone rather than mirrors.

But beyond spatial relationships, Cohen has evinced concern for temporal relations in his recent works. He seems to conceive the painting as a unity of parts. Each part developed as a separate environment, disparate--even opposed to one another--yet finally brought to a state of unity through balance in tension. As the painter has written: "Within the painting are many events, each suggesting an isolated entity. When the work comes into the life of the viewer, all the events coalesce in a continuous variation of perceptual renewals . . . the life within the work must belong, in part, to the transformation of the time within it."

WORKS IN THE EXHIBITION

Agora, oil on canvas, 50 x 50 inches, 1963, lent by Mr. and Mrs. John J. Zeisler.

Antechamber, construction, 16-3/4 x 13-5/8 inches, 1962, lent by Richard Feigen Gallery, Chicago

Anybody's Self-Portrait, assemblage, 9-5/8 inches diameter, 1953, lent by The Museum of Modern Art, New York. Larry Aldrich Foundation Fund.

Atrium I, oil on canvas, 72 x 60 inches, 1961-62, lent by Mr. and Mrs. Jerome L. Stern.

Emblem for an Unknown Nation I, oil on masonite, 68 x 51-1/2 inches, 1954, lent by Mr. and Mrs. Albert Newman.

Figure in Interior, oil on canvas, 72 x 47-1/2 inches, 1958, lent by Sterling Holloway.

Formation II, acrylic on canvas and glass, 84 x 72 inches, 1966, lent by Richard Feigen Gallery, New York.

Hermes, oil, cloth and sandpaper collage on canvas, 46 x 36 inches, 1957, lent by Mr. and Mrs. Joseph R. Shapiro.

Maenad, oil and aluminum leaf, 48 x 36 inches, 1955, lent by Lilly Dache - Gallery Dache.

Oval Figure, oil on canvas, 60 x 30 inches, 1959, lent by Richard Feigen Gallery Chicago.

Overtime, acrylic on canvas, 72 x 60 inches, 1965, lent by Richard Feigen Gallery, New York.

Set I, "A", acrylic on canvas, 60 x 48 inches, 1966, lent by Richard Feigen Gallery, New York.

Set I, "B", acrylic on canvas, 60 x 48 inches, 1966, lent by Richard Feigen Gallery, New York.

Time and a Half, oil on canvas, 60 x 49 inches, 1965, lent by Mr. and Mrs. Jerome L. Stern.

Untitled (La Jolla Figures), acrylic on canvas, 72 x 84 inches, 1965-66, lent by Richard Feigen Gallery, New York.

Some of the works in this exhibition are for sale.

For further information please call Extension 331